

REWRITE



The Magazine of Effective Writing

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Thirty-five cents

WHAT KIND OF ARTICLES DO YOU TRY TO SELL?

Last month we devoted this page to fiction salesmanship. This month we are going to do the same kind of a job on article salesmanship. The tasks are parallel, and much similar with respect to the fundamentals which we try to explain, and which you should attempt to use. As we said last month, a great many writers "don't take careful aim. They just write...and don't know very clearly in their minds what kind of fiction (or, articles) they are trying to write." They don't have any clear idea either what market they intend or hope to hit.

I agree perfectly with those who say that you should never slavishly "slant". The result of that is usually a weak imitation. A writer needs to be practical, however. Story-tellers, no more than automobile builders and radio program-makers, do not just write a story and hope it will fit some market. At least practical ones don't. Having been all my life a newspaper feature writer and magazine editor, I have never written an article or story that I did not have at least a fairly good idea beforehand where it should sell. Whether it would or not is, of course, another matter. That involves my ability to write, my feeling for timing, and the editor's susceptibility both from a long range, and temporary inventory angle.

There are bound to be "breaks". You send an article in on the heels of two others about the same subject, and you are bound to get a rejection—unless the other two paved the way for yours by smelling to high heaven. That is naturally a break for you as opposed to one against you. You can't control the breaks. You can only have faith in your star, and that over the years there will be as many breaks for you as against you. The luck does average out.

But none of these things discount common-sense reasoning that if you are going to enter the commercial market, if you are going to compete with writers who want to be paid, you have got to write better and be greater salesmen than they. In other words, you are under obligation to work out a satisfactory compromise between what you have to sell and what the editors want to buy.

That does not imply a one-way ticket. The editors don't print exclusively what is the perfect illustration of what they want. The magazine is sometimes good, sometimes lousy in their eyes. And, curiously, often lousy, or good, at different times, in the eyes of the readers, who lay their money down. None of us are right all the time. Often when we think we have done our best work, no one in the whole wide world considers it good. On the other hand, sometimes when we have just got something into print for the sake of being there when expected, we get letters and

verbal encomiums. "That was a wonderful article you had on P. 3." It is the one which you most wanted to yank, except you had nothing to take its place.

In other words, there is more give-and-take than many writers realize. You don't have to sacrifice your ideas. Frequently, the editor will offer constructive suggestions that brings the real power of your stuff out. It often makes an article much better to think it out in terms of the readership that will ultimately read it. You bring out premises, anecdotes that you would never think about, if you wrote generally.

I was writing on space rates at first, so I became super-conscious of this action and reaction between what I was thinking & what the reader would think. I was constantly aware that I must hook the editor, so I constantly tried to drop in little, compelling reasons why an editor should wish to print my article, indeed, would feel he couldn't afford not to. This stemmed from a chance remark by Edwin A. Grozier, publisher of that once great "newspaperman's newspaper", the Boston POST. Mr. Grozier was a notable newspaperman as well as former private secretary to the original Pulitzer of the famous newspaper clan of that name. Mr. Grozier was our neighbor and one day he told about a reporter they had who was the despair of the desk because he wrote all his sentences so no one could cut a word without tearing the heart out. If a writer applied the same technique to ideas, I reasoned, he would make a sale much more likely. So I began writing my articles so that they were all meat and human interest, with no excess "fat". I figured if the subject interested me, it would interest an outside reader. But it had not merely to interest me, it had to fascinate, thrill, and hold me. I was a "severe" critic of myself. Over the years that tendency to be the editor as well as the writer became instinctive and has paid dividends in few rejections.

There are almost an infinite number of exciting markets for the author with a little imagination. Recently, a woman told me she'd read all the magazines of a certain type, & had found no place for her. She was thinking only of her ideas, not of the editors or of what she could be capable of writing to fit his needs. Constantly, we get requests that we suggest a market for some article or story. The author plans to shoot the ms. out—without rewriting, or any personalized suiting to the specific needs of the market. A ms. like that has two strikes on it to start with.

An article can't be written to please the slicks and the smaller secondaries. Length alone, and the gloss of more competent polished writing often will make slick writing a specialized job. Then there is the matter of writing for mixed readership, family, etc.

REWRITE

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HELP YOUR	William E. Harris,	KEEP
NEIGHBOR	Elva Ray Harris,	AMERICA
TO HELP YOU	Editors.	STRONG

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OUR GREATEST ASSET

In the stormy world that Pres. Eisenhower faces we need to be strong. We need to recognize the Communist bloc for what it is, a nation dedicated to underhanded aggression and bad faith. Nevertheless, our greatest asset is our own good will. As we keep our moral standards and ideals high, as we offer real leadership to the other nations of the UN & the world at large, we will make ourselves, and our friends strong. But we will also do a great deal to weaken the forces of evil. A political throw-back to the age of barbarity and feudalism cannot long survive in the bright and shining sunlight of hope.

In our policy of aiding other nations and underprivileged peoples we have undoubtedly made and will make mistakes. But in the long history of mankind it is doubtful if there's ever been anything like our extension of the public and private hand of a warm & kind fellowship to men lacking the tools & know how to meet the challenge of the postwar conditions.

The business of sending an expert or two to a community to train natives how disease may be conquered, and the way to a more abundant life may be developed, is surely the most exciting adventure available to any man today. It requires courage, patience and imagination. And it pays off well.

This is not a matter of telling people how. It is showing how. And that takes time and people.

Time and people. I think we tend to underestimate the value of these two elements in Point Four—and to overstress the importance of things and money. For what we are really developing in this program is the capacity of people to improve and shape their own environments. And as this capacity grows, so also will the freedom to make choices grow. This is the essential freedom we Americans possess and are determined to preserve for ourselves.

Stanley Andrews

In the State Department publication, from which the "box" on this page is clipped, Mr. Andrews points out that in Paraguay between 1936 through 1940, that nation was buying about \$725,000 worth of goods from us. But by 1949 our technical education program enabled Paraguay to buy \$7,500,000 worth of American exports. And Paraguay was contributing almost 4 times our share of the operational fund to finance the training of local technicians. (These figures are all annual.)

Wherever men are building creatively, and there is spiritual adventure, you will find no desire or time for the evils of Communism and the parallel pursuits of negative individual selfishness. Gangsterism, juvenile delinquency, parental delinquency, corruption in government and the alleged wholesale desertions from the armed forces are all of a single pattern. Disrupt family life, permit young men and women to grow up in slums and divest them of any chance for security, and the security of a creative way of life, and you will soon begin to notice the end products of vice and sadistic living.

When any form of authoritarian power commences to entertain delusions of omnipotence and to coerce those unfortunate enough to be within its reach, it is time for a change. A great deal is being said about the necessity for cutting down on our foreign aid, of making other NATO nations pay their proportionate share of making the free world able to stand up against the Communists. Let us not forget, however, that in our fear of the Soviets we allowed much of the great work of technical assistance to be changed into the pattern of more guns and less butter. Let us not forget either that some of this remarkable pioneering has been salvaged by organizations such as the Ford Foundation.

Mr. Andrews says that the kind of work to which I refer is "deeply rooted in the American tradition of a neighbor helping another neighbor, of the responsibility of a group for all its members...It assumes the innate capacity of the individual to help himself, and to improve his own environment...It is a purely constructive, creative undertaking & non-military in character." In other words, it is as Yankee in its virtue as a "bee" to help a neighbor raise his house-frame, or a project by the members of a group like the WCS Family, to help each other through working together.

We need to free all men everywhere from the fears of disease and starvation and misery under a dictator-ridden government. We can easily do this by handing them the keys to a self-reliant way of life. But we must also free our own people from the insecurity of debt, of high taxes & paternalism.

FIELD REPORTER

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WCS TOWN MEETING

The next issue of REWRITE will be the April issue. From then on REWRITE will appear on an every other month basis. Please notice that this issue (Feb.) contains 20 pages instead of 16. We hope and expect to continue on that basis.

We are making this change primarily for a single reason. To bring you a better publication. For 12 years Bill has been bringing you approximately 15,000 words a month. The recent issues of REWRITE with Elva's poetry pages, a regular feature for nearly 7½ years, have run larger than that. This practically equals one of the better writers' magazines and compares favorably with the others, all of which are supported by advertising. This schedule has demanded of us an average turn-out of copy averaging 1,000 words every two days, 52 weeks in the year. Close to a million words in the 147 issues we have offered you.

With the continued growth of our never advertised WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE and our insistence on giving you a unique, reportorial coverage, with comment, on the writing & selling fields, a service that is not even attempted by other writers' magazines, such a schedule has become increasingly restricting and hampering. We can give you a better edited and more newsworthy magazine if we are free to move about more, and to spend larger amounts of time on original research and personal interviews for the Central Ms. Markets File, which supplies a great deal of exact and accurate information to our clients and those readers of REWRITE, who keep contact with us and bring their writing & selling problems to us, or to whom we send late market news whenever we write to them.

Some of the news in the next column is an example of what we mean. Our visits to summer conferences, our winter visit to the N. E. Theater Conference (Bill is serving on 3 committees of the latter), fill us with new ideas for writers, and permit us to get for you exclusive news of important developments that are rarely covered in the writing profession's press. Elva and I believe the new schedule will save us at least a month each per year in freedom from mechanical details. You will be the beneficiary from this.

An incidental factor in this new schedule is the expiration date of present subscriptions. These will expire at the same dates. The slight decrease in the amount of material sent to you is balanced by our not having to increase the subscription price. In 12 years this has been raised only once. At present it is much lower than that of magazines supported by large amounts of advertising. We want to keep it so, for the writers—and there are hundreds of them—who can't afford even one writers' magazine. (Our WCS Scholarship Fund takes care of many of them, thanks to the generosity of other writers.)

We aim to continue our policy of not taking any advertising, of advising writers about services we do not consider to their advantage, and ourselves giving as full service as we can commensurate with the financial condition of REWRITE. It will always be primarily a labor of love rather than profitable investment.

Therefore, any subscriber who is dissatisfied with the shorter subscription schedule may have his money refunded pro rata, if he will write in and request it.

NEWS AT WCS HOUSE

Just as we went to press (a little late because of the larger issue this month), Elva and Bill were invited to serve on the staff of the Philadelphia Regional Writers' Conference. Elva has also been invited to serve as a poetry judge for the Boston Ms. Clubs annual contest. (She regretfully had to refuse the American Poetry League somewhat earlier because of her tight schedule.) This will be Bill's second year at Philadelphia, & Elva's first. Bill is also scheduled to return for another year at the enlarged 3-day sessions at the Maine State Writers' Conference, early in August.

The Phila. Regional Conference this year, is being held June 17, 18, 19. Elva is leading the Poetry Workshop and I the SlickShort Story. There are nearly a dozen other classifications, all of which will be headed by an exciting list of leaders, experienced & professional. In addition, there are conference contests involving valuable prizes. Because of its nearness to NYC and Phila. publishing centers, and because of the truly remarkable efficiency with which it is run, the Phila. Regional Writers' Conference has become in a matter of 5 years one of the best for serious writers. Don't miss it. Write to: Mrs. Olga P. MacFarland, 737 Sharon Ave., Collingdale, Penna. She's the registrar.

This has been a magical winter in our hills. Except for the 20 inches early in January, we have been alternating between a warm spring "thaw" and cold, clear horizon lines. Billy was rugged during the best of it and skied and slid and coasted "far distances". Just as we went to press, being exposed to measles, he was given one of those new-fangled preventive shots and so now we're waiting with "baited breath" to see whether his "case" will be: light, heavy or not at all. With a keen sense for dramatic timing, Billy has been enjoying himself and making this an example of "to be continued".

Hardly had Bill and Elva settled into being Congregationalists when Bill was sent as a delegate to the Fitchburg Council of Churches winter meeting. It was a fine example of an ecumenical meeting of minds on a common and thoroughly universal level. Several races & creeds are represented. But that is as religion and human friendliness should be.

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FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva Ray Harris

THE POETS WORKSHOP

The poem to be discussed this month is M. Lovina Cooper's:

WATERLILY

Medallion like, on pad of jade-green,
water-glossed,
You float serene, in frame of beauty
unembossed,
On pool of malachite shot through with
rippled gold.
Around your pointed petals insects hum,
and bold
Slim dragonflies dart sportively in flight,
each one
Irradiant-winged, and droning in the
shimmering sun
In ceaseless monotone. Prim pad and petals
lie
Upon reflected white and blue of cloud
and sky.
As censer to some Pagan god you raise
your cup
From whose gold throat its fragrant scent
drifts slowly up
To float unseen, perchance to dim and
distant goals
Where live undying, fadeless waterlily
souls.

It is appropriate that we should be discussing a summer poem now surrounded by the winter's white, since this is the time when all good salesmen of literary property must think in terms of what will be published in the warm months.

The first comment comes from Helen Nye. We analyzed her poem a few months ago. She says: "The poem builds up a setting of quiet, and colorful beauty, delicately descriptive and mood-making. Note the colors mentioned, or suggested, jade-green, malachite, gold, blue.

"I like the long slow lines because they are suggestive of the languid feeling which comes over one occasionally on a perfect summer day. It is so easy to see how on such a day one could lose one's self in the beauty of a freshly opened waterlily and drift into the day dreaming imagery of the last four lines. The words 'droning in the shimmering sun in ceaseless monotone'...have an important sound value in the repetition of the os which seem to echo the monotonous hum of the dragonflies."

On the other side of the fence Mary Grant Charles thinks the poem would be better done in four- or five-beat lines. From the point of view of available space in magazine columns, it probably would. Not many columns in a magazine or newspaper are wide enough for such long lines without dividing them. The slow movement of iambic pentameter would ad-

equately suggest the laziness of the summer scene the poetess describes so clearly. Mrs. Charles also objects to the two compound adjectives in the first line. On what grounds she does not say. I, personally, see no objection to them as compounds. However, the three long beats "jade-green, wa"—, coming together as they do, might serve better were they not used in the first line. It's a good idea to set the pattern of the meter without variations in the first line of verse. Then you can go on to use it and vary it accordingly to need.

Enola Chamberlain, whose poem we will discuss in the March-April issue, has a comment to make concerning the first line. She says: "With 'green' in the first line and 'serene' in the second, there is an unintentional inner rhyme. In my estimation it detracts from the smooth flow of the poem. It brings us up subtly where we are not supposed to be stopped." Quite true. Why not make a substitution for "jade-green"? One that will follow that iambic pattern and which does not rhyme with "serene", but at the same time keeps the clear descriptive quality of the adjective now being used.

We have heard from three women. Now let's see what the men have to say. From Clarence C. Adams comes this comment. "My main objection to this poem is its redundancy of words. There are too many adjectives used to allow it to be interesting reading. It reads too heavy. It is hard to read and after reading it one is not sure what it is all about." It should be added that Mrs. Charles also said she was not sure of the meaning. And while the poem seemed perfectly clear to all of the others who commented, it is interesting that Bill was also confused. He agreed with Clarence Adams that the piece was overwritten & that as Mr. Adams puts it: "Used sparingly, these adjectives are good. But thrown in as they are, it puts too much sugar in the coffee."

Mr. Adams further stated that no metaphors or similes had been used to paint a picture. Bill and I beg to differ. Understanding the distinction between metaphors and similes is very difficult for many people. We here at WCS House have therefore, fallen out of the old habit of using these terms. The difference between a simile and a metaphor & other figures of speech performing the identical function is slight. If a person is able to use those figures, it matters little, or not at all whether he can accurately "name" them. There are at least five such "figures" in this poem: "medallion like"; "As censor to some Pagan god you raise your cup"; "gold throat"; "rippled gold"; and "On pool of malachite". In each of these expressions the author has described one thing in terms of another. "Prim pad" is another case in point, though a more subtle one. Prim, usually applied to an individual, is here used in connection with a flower, bringing with it all its overtones gathered from use with human beings.

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ings.

That is the secret of these figures of an ornamented, sometimes ornate, speech. These words torn away from their regular usage are able to bring their overtones, their connotations, with them to grace the new field.. It is the use of this sort of figure of the transplanted description that helps a writer to portray an image vividly and beautifully. Though we may agree with Mr. Adams that the poem is overdone, I think we must admit and concede that it is full of clear-cut imagery. Perhaps we can compromise by suggesting that the poem gives the effect of an author straining a little too hard to give the perfect and precise description. One can be too exact.

The question of whether dragonflies make a sound when they zoom about, received quite a bit of discussion. Bessie H. Hartling said: "The rhythm is rather monotonous, but it is suitable to the quiet scene. Variety is produced by calling attention, not only to the eye scene, but also to the scent of the lily and the monotonous drone and motion of the dragonflies." Enola Chamberlin says: "I did not know dragonflies droned, and 'shimmering sun' strikes me as trite. But the poem has so much originality that I can forgive it."

To this J. Wilson Wallace adds: "Although my memory of dragonflies doesn't include any sound, I'm willing to let them drone in the shimmering sun to lull the late summer peace I love. Plenty of other insects are droning if the dragonflies may not be."

"However, I had real difficulty reconciling the reflected white and blue of cloud & sky with the pool of malachite shot through with rippled gold. Both are lovely settings, but how can they exist simultaneously? I wish some other idea could be fitted in there, to continue the image and thought development, without reverting back to and confusing the setting which is already painted. Although I don't especially like the following which is the best I can do, it may suggest a better idea to the author:

Prim pad and petals lie
Serene and holy, worshipping the sky.

Such a thought would, perhaps, pave the way for the concluding censer idea which, I believe, is rather pleasant."

As to the dragonflies, I don't know, but the matter could be settled with a little research. For some people, like Mr. Wallace & myself, it would not matter, but for others (including Bill) an anachronism can lessen, and spoil, the pleasure received from reading the poem, because by its very nature it calls attention to itself. A poet must surely always be accurate. No untruths, however small and seemingly unimportant, must be allowed to slip in to distract a reader's attention from the essence of a poem. Let us

hope that dragonflies do drone, because, as Bessie H. Hartling says, it adds so much to a poem when more than the visual sense gets called into play.

No one who wrote in made any comment on the fragrant scent drifting slowly up from that gold throat of the waterlily. In New England it is the white waterlily that has the fragrant scent. The yellow variety has something else again in the line of perfume. I can never forget as a child inching my way towards a waterlily, backing and turning the rowboat, until I could, by clinging to the gunwales, with one hand, and reaching far out with the other, pluck it, only to find that it was—better to contemplate it from a distance.

Of course the scent Miss Cooper refers to is that of the imaginary incense. But for a person familiar with the strong, unpleasant odor of the flower, the two can help but become mingled. However, Miss Cooper lives in Florida, and the southern variety may be different. If so, this would not be an anachronism, and therefore, would not detract from a local reader's pleasure.

A peculiar result of this Workshop is, it seems to me, the extremes to which people in general went in their criticism. Those who liked the poem, were enthusiastic about it. Their suggestions were only for improvement of small details. Those who didn't like it, couldn't find much that was good about this poem. That is also true of much published poetry, and it is the reason why one has to exercise so much care in choosing a market. In one magazine serving a certain type of reader this poem might go over big. In another, contrastingly, it would be considered overdone and too sweet.

But it is possible to appeal to both types of audience. Both would appreciate vivid imagery and it would not hurt the poem a bit for the first type of audience, if some, not all, of the "sweetness" were taken out.

In the next issue, which is the March-April issue, we discuss Enola Chamberlin's poem, "The Misplaced".

THE MISPLACED

He should have romped beside a woodland
stream,
With scented petals falling on his hair.
Brown-backed and gay, he should have dreamed
his dream,
Have run and laughed and been most unaware
Of want and misery, squalor anywhere.

Instead, white faced and grim he prowls a
street,
Where ice trucks drip their meltings on
his feet.

Enola Chamberlin

NOTE: from now on there will be a Workshop
Please turn to P. 10

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HERES A PRIZE AWARD AND A SERIOUS PROBLEM

A. S. Barnes & Co., John Lowell Pratt, 232 Madison Ave., NYC 16, has withheld 2 awards (\$2,500 each for the best sports novel, and for the best general non-fiction book about sports or sports personalities). However, it is announced that both prizes are being offered again in 1953. Close: Dec. 31, 1953.

(Note: the "escape" clause in these prize contests is probably a practical necessity in the minds of publishers. It is obvious that they can't afford to pay for "junk". But on the other hand, if writers take pains to try to satisfy conditions, it is discouraging & leaves a sour taste in the mouth to have an enticing prize held back.

That is why some publishers have turned to the "fellowship" in preference to the award of money to a particular book ms. It allows them more freedom to nurse a promising writer along. Behind the scenes, many publishing houses do this, often on a lavish scale. An example was the way the late Maxwell Perkins of Scribners prepared Thomas Wolfe for publication. In such a case the author owes an editor a loyalty that is not always shown.

I believe that if publishers got together and worked out groups in various parts of the country, where promising writers could find expert counselling, it would be to the great advantage of books and magazines, indeed, to advantage of all writing. Some experiments, actually, have already been started. Theater Please turn to P. 8

DOES THIS "ADD UP" RIGHT?

Two friends of ours recently heard that a representative of a "press" would be in Boston on a certain date. So they accepted the blanket invitation to go see him. One writer was a trained newspaperman. He gave us a very hilarious account of his search for "a nigger in the woodpile". It was slow in appearing. But since the "very suave young man representing the President" was from a vanity press, black Sambo did eventually crawl into view.

This is how it worked. The very suave man glanced at the bulky ms., said it looked to be publishable to him, but he would obviously have to take it back to be processed editorially. Of course the authors readily assented to this. A suitable amount of time elapsed. The very suave young man had offered a fine sales talk about the record and achievements of the firm.

One day came a letter from the firm. Substance of it was that this was the author's lucky day. The ms. had been "accepted". At least a sub-editor had reported very favorably as a result of the reader's report. In the opinion of our newspaper friend it seemed strange that the sub-editor and the reader should be the same. But skip that, the report was pleasantly fulsome and adulatory. A letter would come in a few days direct from Please turn to P. 8

SOME NEWS AND COMMENT

The League of Vermont Writers, Vera A. Perkins, 242 So. Main St., Rutland, Vt., holds its Winter Meeting on Saturday, March 14th, at the Dog Team Tavern, Middlebury. Everyone who chances to be in those parts is invited to attend, but reservations for lunch are advisable. Interesting speakers & fun.

B. Coursin Black, who hid himself away in Michigan, was moved by our reference to the writers who "isolate themselves in ivory towers" (See: Dec. issue) to remark that an ivory tower is ideal for doing one's work. As a permanent habitation it is a "prison to the creative mind". A writer needs the stimulation of conflict, and mixing with the world for ideas, experience and living with human beings. Right!

The FTC has ordered in an initial decision that Hillman Periodicals, Inc. clearly mark CONFESSIONS and other magazines so that the readers will recognize reprint material. The front cover, the masthead and the beginning of each story or other reprint material, is to indicate the fact. (A boost for those who write and print original stories.)

The Authors' League of America Pulp Writers' Section has folded. The Authors' Guild will hereafter care for the interests of the pulp writers. That's a plain indication the pulp magazines have been badly hurt by paper backed books and the growth of 25¢ & 35¢ literature.

"Pepper & Salt" Column, Emil Berger, WALL STREET JOURNAL, 44 Broad St., NYC 4, uses a humorous verse each day, and epigrams, anecdotes and, I believe, cartoons. Pays \$3 for couplets, \$5 for anything longer. A member of the WCS Family writes: "He seems receptive to the work of new writers (at any rate he published one of my first efforts). Pays on the 10th of the month following acceptance. However, payment may have been speeded up. I received payment for my 2 limericks by air-mail just 24 hours after acceptance. That, for my money, is the kindest treatment that any writer could ask for!"

We are glad to pass this thumbnail sketch of an editor along. May we remind writers a short daily column is fairly limited in its ability to digest contributions. Study the market, and don't flood Mr. Berger with too much material. He will become overstocked & then no one will gain.

Note about the Batting Average Column. perquisite, or "perk", as the English say, of the "B.A." column is that the writers in their letters tell us what they are writing and we usually say: "good! Try this market, or that. Or why don't you do an article, or story for such a magazine." In the course of a year it all adds up to a lot of sales.

Why don't you let us hear from you? We do enjoy knowing what our friends are doing.

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SOME BUSINESS MATTERS

At the annual meeting of the Authors' Guild a question was raised that concerns writers everywhere. "Should a bankrupt agent, rendering no service and incapable of doing so, continue to collect 10% commissions from an author?"

The answer is decidedly "no!" There is one very simple way to avoid this predicament. A writer can write a memorandum agreement and incorporate it in a letter, stating its his understanding that the relationship between the two parties is terminable, by either on notice after so many days or weeks, and all moneys due the author automatically revert, should the agent become bankrupt, to the author. A somewhat similar provision is often written in book contracts in favor of writers by reputable agents. So most agents presumably would accept such an agreement. The author in general should not be bound by an agent to an exclusive or all inclusive contract. The better agencies which have operated for a period of years, can usually offer writers unquestionable service and they do not seek to tie a client down. But it is well to be protected in this way. A lawyer can and should be consulted on this matter, if the writer's income is sizable. Some agents file a bond in the case of important, high income clients. It really should be the universal rule that they post at least some minimum bond.

The Guild has advised its members to submit recommendations to their congressmen in favor of the Reed-McKeogh bills now pending before Congress permitting writers and other self-employed professionals to divert up to \$75,000 of income in a good year into insurance policies called "Restricted Retirement Pensions", thereby relieving them of a high tax one year, and perhaps no tax in the following years. Certainly some such method is preferable to the present "Social Security" law whereby a self-employed person has no protection unless he earns at least \$400, and to collect a pension he cannot possibly hope to live on, must "retire" to the extent of not earning after the retirement age more than \$600. That is an unworkable law making persons, who might be useful, little more than slave pensioners to a bureaucratic, socialistic government.

Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations" is going into a 50% edition published by Doubleday & Co. It's an abridged edition, of course.

MANAS, Manas Publishing Co., Box 112, El Sereno Sta., Los Angeles 32, Cal., thoughtful review, which uses unsigned articles, is sending 3 free sample copies to prospective subscribers. "Pfaff" of the Writers Workshop in San Francisco sent us a copy.

Mrs. Jno. S. McGill, 724 So. Davis, Sulphur Springs, Texas, good friend and member of the WCS Family, has just lost through death her beloved husband. We grieve for her.

THE TEST OF READABILITY

The Newsletter published by Benn Hall Associates passed along a discussion by Christian Science MONITOR correspondent H. Phelps Gates of the readability of newspapers, and by implication, other forms of writing. He stressed ease of reading. He found, for instance, such words as "extraterritorially", "antibiotic", "equivocation", "physiological" and "antithetical" in the daily paper. Some of these, I might add, are hard to take in, visually, as well as mentally. They discourage readers who are not familiar with words of that kind.

Gates suggested 5 tests for readability:

- (1) Take 100-word samples. They should average 135 to 145 syllables per 100 words.
- (2) Count the words per sentence in the entire story. For easy reading, average length of sentences should be 14 to 16 words. This is about the length of WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION and NEW YORKER copy. (Did you ever stop to realize there might be copy rules of this type? In a religious magazine I found average length, particularly in dramatic scenes, to be much shorter than this. Around 6 to 10 words. Pretty good writing, too.)
- (3) Take 100-word samples. Count the personal words. If they number more than 10 or more per 100, the copy is easy, interesting, and appealing to read.
- (4) Count the passive verbs. Overuse of the passive verb makes copy dull, lifeless, confusing, and hard to read.
- (5) Test your story for "one idea" appeal.. Will the reader grasp one single idea right at the start of the story?

And just to show you what "eye appeal" is I have set the above paragraph very closely. It would be much more readable if each idea were paragraphed separately...Human nature, incidentally, being what it is, I doubt one per cent of the circulation of REWRITE will take the trouble to make these tests either of someone else's or their own writing! It would be one of the best and easiest ways to improve one's writing on a permanent basis.

That test for one idea alone appeal, is a hint that's worth its weight in uranium. It is the first thing I think about after finishing a story. I ask myself, does the line of interest hold together all through? Does the dramatic change in the MC move steadily from one extreme to the other? Does it take place to some degree in every scene? Or are there disconnected passages, irrelevant and tangential scenes scattered through the story? Does the "train" need "coupling" at certain places?

Bear in mind that to be readable, to do a certain amount of housekeeping, in order to make a story easier to take in, is never to cheapen it. Cheap writing evolves out of the author's mind, his outlook on things. Great writing is always easy to read, although it may pertain to the most serious subjects. A great writer makes these easy to read.

REWRITE

Cont'd from P. 6. ("ADD UP")

the president. Meanwhile the sub-editor described alluring details of promotion, publicity and format.

The letter from the president did arrive. It repeated what the sub-editor had said. It definitively "accepted" the book and offered a "contract". Now the final paragraph is interesting. It says in substance that consideration being given to the fact the publisher is paying for the publication, & all the details as above described, the author, and here is little black Sambo in person, agrees to pay the publisher the sum of—. The sum is variable in individual cases. But the details are the same: one-third right away, another third on receipt of galleys, and the final third on publication day. And, may we respectfully add, the total payment usually runs into four figures. You have to have money to buy a Cadillac or publish a book!

Now this sales build-up is, substantially, formalized by several vanity houses which are making so much money they can afford to advertise widely in writers' magazines, and some of the so-called better book reviews. (I am glad to say that REWRITE and The WRITER, alone, refuse this kind of advertising "subsidy".) These vanity houses can also "afford" the luxury of very suave young men to go on scouting trips. So, the particular instance I refer to is typical of a number of firms. ("If the cap fits, wear it.")

Now, again, these firms are want periodically, in attempting to win REWRITE away from its uncompromising position of speaking out in the public interest and the protection of inexperienced writers, to say that what are called the "legitimate" or "reputable" publishers do this kind of "subsidized" publication. Maybe they do in isolated instances. But the fact remains that even an inexperienced writer can see the difference and select the better publisher when the deal offered him is lined up this way:

Publisher A says: "I think this ms. may sell. I will publish it and invest my own money in it, win or lose."

Publisher B says: "I think this ms. is wonderful! I am sure it will sell. I will publish it (print it at the author's expense) & positively won't spend a cent of my own money on it. And the author will have to pay me the cost and my profit in advance."

Which publisher would you have the greatest confidence in? Do you really think that under such circumstances even if an "author" is rejected by legitimate publishers it will advance his interests to be published by the other kind of publisher? Or that there's any incentive for the vanity publisher to spend time, money and energy on a job that has already paid him all that in 95% of the cases it is likely to? That is why everyone familiar with publishing is against vanity printing of one's mss. Not that it is immoral ~~and~~

or unethical. It is just poor business, and a public confession of failure for the writer. We don't like to see writers get stuck.

Cont'd from P. 6. (Awards)

people are giving expert professional background coaching to promising playwrights. A course in publishing procedures has been offered successfully in the summer school, by Radcliffe College for several years.

Strictly college and university "courses" in writing, although helpful, and often conducted by capable authors, do not unfailingly prove their value. The thing that is useful is when writers have an opportunity to write the way they want to under conditions, or an area of discussion, similar to professional, practical writing of the better sort. Therefore, I do not believe that merely financing university schools of writing is the secret to this problem.

I do believe that where writers can talk, argue and learn from other writers, editors and publishers, as well as good teachers, a promising writer will mature faster than if he worked alone, or studied in a school. The conferences and a few of the summer "institutes" and workshops, in spite of their limitation to a few days, or six weeks, and in spite of the social and pseudo "arty" character of many of them, have proved this.

One great and resounding by-product of the serious attempt to provide good professional instruction by writers and editors, would be the gradual elimination of the flim-flam mail-order "courses", "critic-agents", etc., which now fool hundreds of writers and take from them often hard earned money. Any profession as culturally important as the publishing business, has much to answer for in tolerating the kind of low journalism which accepts advertising support from the average "accounts" now seen in pages of most of the writers' magazines. Reputable, decent men & women in the publishing, editorial, agency, criticism fields have a moral, if not legal, responsibility to sweep out the incompetent and knavish "camp followers" who now smudge the high profession of literature whether it be dedicated to literary or mere entertainment values.

In the final analysis only the publishing industry can do this, because as in the recently discussed matter of pornographic literature selling particularly in the soft cover book field, the authorities are stymied. They simply do not have the professional or legal standards to measure what is evil and what is good. But editors, into whose editorial offices come the spurious agents, for example, can tell the difference between the good, reputable agent and the fee-reading or combination "critic-agent".

It is not an easy thing to clean house. If men of good faith would work together, they could do something gradually. And they would uncover for themselves really good authors.

REWRITE

GIVE THEM THE BEST YOU HAVE

I have been asked to write an article for writers of children's stories. It is essential in this field to remember that all the magazines are edited by adults, and many of them are bought by or with the advice of adults. You are, therefore, writing for grown up readers and their conception of what the children would like to or ought to read, as well as for the children themselves. There is the further thought that some of the editors understand children and some don't. A writer for juvenile magazines should decide whether he himself understands a child and talks the latter's language, and secondly, whether he is writing for the first type of editor or the second. It makes a difference in the way you write.

The "right" decision is the basis of story-telling in every age-group. The only real difference is a relative one. You don't put it over in quite the same way for a teen-age high schooler as you would for a pre-school child. Remember that children are idealists and take a great interest in the creative & thrilling side of the great new world their minds are exploring for the first time. So it is not wrong to have stories end in happy or satisfactory ways.

But that is where Conflict rears its ugly head. The decision and the achievement that makes its results possible, must not develop too easily. A child likes to compete and struggle, if the "fight" does not require a superhuman endurance. Remember again that a child has more physical energy than a grown up person, but it does not last as long. So the conflict must be shorter, or broken into easily followed steps.

That brings up two ideas. The first is of course the element of story. A child wishes to identify himself with the story even more than do adults. They still have the "let us pretend" quality. Billy at seven and a small 5-year old friend spent a whole afternoon a few days ago selling lumber and a snow-plow service to Elva, who was busy cooking in the kitchen. And in the end Billy bought out of business his little friend's plowing service.

So children want above all else a "story" that can be lived in their own terms, or in their experience. They want the adults kept in the background. They want a story that's exciting and colorful, in which things happen, and which seems natural. Billy is just emerging from that age of the very young in which the children can have fun merely imitating the life about them. He still starts a new game very soon after experiencing a new background, which is based on a recreation, a use, of that background. If we were to visit a fishing village, for instance, I wouldn't be surprised to see fish boats and lobsterpots develop from his toys. By the teen-age period on the other hand, while the background must be for the most part that of the girls

and boys, they are eager to see how those in different backgrounds live. And, even more, how all the children they read about, meet, face, and solve the situations they meet. A boy, or girl, is a complex personality, combining the need for the security of a background they can understand and handle, & also the call of adventure in new worlds.

So much for the element of story. Now let us look for a moment at a technical phase of meeting these demands. The child living intensely through his emotions, also has that feeling for simple logic, which in the very young makes it difficult to reason with the lad or girl whose little mind revolves about a fixed idea. He may have forgotten it completely in five minutes, but while he works on it it must be followed out in its logical pattern.

What I am driving at is that the best and most loved stories are those that present a simple problem in an easily understood set-up. The boy or girl who faces a problem and is torn between two alternatives, can easily become a hero or heroine where those who face a complex, foggy issue do not. You can scarcely be too careful in sharpening up an issue. The little boy who has to break some promise, or, keeping it, will lose a chance for fun, is a good example. He must choose. The little boy who wants to play instead of go to church with his parents. Or perhaps he disobeys or takes a risk that may seem wise and good to him; doing so, he runs into serious danger and learns a lesson.

It is at this point that the child's & the adult mind sometimes differs as to the character of a story. More in the Sunday School type of story, less in the secular variety, you strike the story that follows a formula resembling "eat-your-cake-and-have-it-too". The grown-up turns away from what seems too easily the happy ending. The child, who has a less critical mind, likes the story if it proves its point fairly naturally and keeps away from the forced sentimentality of "Now children, I am going to tell you a story about a very good little boy". The child can value the new experience and the new awareness to life which the parent takes too much for granted.

The point is that the lesson must be sound enough and natural enough in its life presentation to be acceptable as logical and inevitable. Beside the plotting of an adult's story the pattern of a juvenile may seem so simple that it is obvious. Of course it can be cheapened and the characters then become merely puppets of the author who moves them around to get a pre-determined effect. In a sense this is always true of every story. The author must keep out of sight and pull those strings so artfully that he escapes notice. A vivid, colorful background, natural characterization, and an author's zest for telling his story are the best counter-irritants in such cases. Put warmth & color into it.

REWRITE

Cont'd from P. 5. (POETRY)
For poets in every issue of REWRITE. Deadline for comments, therefore, will have to be advanced. Comments will have to get here in time for our date with the printer. So, get your comments in as early as possible

Deadline for next issue: March 10th. Time will be longer, we hope, for the June issue and those that follow. But please comment—even if late. All comments are sent to that author for whom they are intended.

We pay \$1.00 for every poem we use. Every submission must be accompanied by a comment on the previous poems published. Help the other fellow so he will help you.

THE BATTING AVERAGE COLUMN (MORE)

Florence M. Davis
Serial: WEE WISDOM
Short Story: YOUNG PEOPLE.

Alice Morse
Poem: CATS.

Experience Meeting. One of our WCS Family members recently had a story accepted by an editor whose magazine does not copyright. He offered to have it done though, if she cared to pay the fee. As it involved serialized parts, this would mean several \$4 fees. I advised her that if there were second serial rights, or a possibility of a book, this copyright should be recorded. Otherwise, the copyright of the later publications would be valueless since the original material would be in the public domain.

Phila. Regional Writers' Conference, Mrs. Gladys Knipe, 344 Llandrillo Rd., Cynwyd, Pa. Prizes are offered in 12 classifications. A fee of \$1 and a return stamped envelop must be enclosed with each ms. Closes: May 1st. A folder will be sent on demand. Enclose postage and return envelop, please.

Macfadden Publications, Virginia V. Rapp, 205 E. 42nd St., NYC 17, offers \$40,000 altogether for Confession stories. Closes: Apr. 30, 1953.

Dr. Christian Award, 17 State St., NYC 4, Don't forget this high pay radio contest. It closes: March 1st, annually.

The number of serials WCS Family writers, we're happy to report, are selling, is growing rapidly. Even in the juvenile field the check is written in 3 figures. Showing how far ahead these are planned, Mrs. Davis was told her serial "might be scheduled in '54". But she was paid on acceptance.

WEE WISDOM, Jane Palmer, Lee's Summit, Mo., told Mrs. Davis, "we have all our material, for 1953, but shall be looking for material for Easter, September (school), Halloween & New Year's." When they accepted her serial, they checked their record of mss. previous-

ly received. They knew exactly how many had been sent in, accepted or rejected. Is not that a good reason for aiming carefully? In some offices this record would determine an author's rate on an acceptance. You want to see that your old mistakes will not rise up to haunt you.

THE FICTION WORKSHOPS

These have got rather shunted aside lately, and were even overlooked in last month's issue. It has been difficult to develop them properly because of lack of space. With our new schedule we hope to improve and enlarge them. In April we will report on the Flash-back workshop (entries due: Feb. 10th).

Dramatic Scenario. This calls for an emotionalized summary or outline of your story in the manner of an anecdote. Try to sell a reader and hook an editor into wanting to be first reader of it when it is finished. We pay \$1 for any ms. we use. Closes: Apr. 10.

Summer Conferences. Now is the time to be making plans to attend one. They will advertise and be listed in writers' magazines in a month or two. I am a firm believer in going to conferences because they offer you a good perspective on your own writing. They help you to make contacts with other writers and editors, and they enable you to pile up a realistic experience and attitude towards writing and selling. I don't believe in any writer spending all the summer going to all the conferences he can manage. That turns a good experience into a social orgy. It is a wise thing, though, to sample different conferences, and discover for yourself what is good and what is phoney in this world of dispensing information for writers. Try to invest your money wisely, but don't be afraid to experiment and "taste". When you find an author, editor or teacher who helps you, be sure to keep the contact alive. Make the utmost out of it. It is wonderful to learn at the knee of a man, or woman, who knows how, & is generous and capable in sharing his gift with you.

Don't keep your nose too close to a grindstone. The good writer constantly writes and invests some of his time in creative living. You can't spend all of your time on production. You have to fill the pitcher occasionally. And don't do this too purposefully. An adventure that sometimes seems to have nothing to do with writing, will bring rich dividends. Be first of all alive, interested in the great world in which you live. If you're a writer, you will find yourself rushing to your desk, and feeling refreshed and stimulated.

"Complete Files" of REWRITE. We have filled several orders recently for all the back copies of REWRITE we have in stock. We are glad to let you have about 3 years of them, for \$3.25 postpaid. And for the time being, duplicate subscriptions, \$1. Useful for files

REWRITE

"READING MAKETH A FULL MAN"

Several writers recently have expressed a distaste for reading books about writing. A similar reason has in each case been offered, namely that the books "give the same identical advice—repeated and rehearsed." It seems to me that these writers are avoiding not the dreariness of the repeated exhortations, but their own unwillingness to study and master the fundamental basic techniques that all writers must somehow acquire before they can write effectively in whatever medium they select.

There are a number of values to be gained from wide reading about one's profession. I decided when I prepared to give my workshop classes for the first time in Cambridge, about 15 years ago, that I had better do the job of reading every book that had been and was being written about short story writing at that time. (I had of course read and reread every known book on playwriting since I had been a student for two years at the "47 Workshop" at Harvard, first course of creative writing in this country.) I must, I believe, have read close to 50 books, many of them pretty dreary and some of them unreliable, to say the least.

In all of these I found a notable similarity of phrasing and theory. The words mostly were the same, with only a variety showing up in the teaching ability or the skill of the man in achieving some catch phrases, or a novel approach to the subject. Generally, the style was didactic, offering abstract theory with very few practical examples.

But, and here was the lesson for me, fundamentals began to show up clearly, as they were repeated over and over again. I learned clearly the essentials that needed to be hammered upon, and made crystal clear. The contrasting experience I had had in the play field and the practical work I had done as a featured writer, proved to me that the fundamentals were the same in those two fields. And in a friendly discussion that ranged over a number of years, Charles H. Woodbury, a great marine painter, showed me that he used them in his profession.

Technical skill comes from doing, yes, but it also comes from thinking unendingly, and making the ability to do little things come right out of one's pores and instincts. How many times have I taken a short story apart for just one quality or characteristic. Its line of interest, its dialogue, its characterization or its viewpoint. It would be well if textbooks would do this more. They ought to. But if they skip the fundamentals, they do not do their primary chore. And no textbook can do the actual sweating for you. I had had 15 years of going to plays, and six years of listening to dialogue as a "stage-hand" for the 47 Workshop, besides 6 hours a week for 2 years of college work under Prof. G. P. Baker. But when I started to try fic-

tion writing, I kept a notebook for several years, and whenever I noticed a new variant on the use or positioning of the trite: "he said," I jotted it down. For a longer time I practiced variations, endless phrasings and recombinations of dialogue and action; of action alone, to learn timing that would appear effortless to the reader. You know it often has been said that no story-teller succeeds in writing good fiction until the reader is unaware of his "he said's".

One of the regrettable facts about writing fiction is that you never master it so that you can stop practicing. If you do, you lose your flexibility. The old joke about Paderewski is a true one for fiction writers. If you stop writing dialogue for a week, you'll notice your stiffness; two weeks, your editors will notice it; and a month, your readers will notice it. If you do not believe me lay off completely for a short while, then, try to get started again. That may explain, I think, why the beginnings of so many novels tend to be dead dull, and so inferior to the later passages.

Perhaps the books on technique are dreary and unappetizing. But did you ever think that disagreeing with someone, or trying to do a better job in your mind than the other chap is one of the best ways of achieving greater flexibility yourself? Or that one "live" and inspiring phrase in an otherwise incompetent book can light a keg of dynamite under you? Many is the time I have been reading a stilted book or ms. and have been under sudden compulsion to get some good, new ideas down on paper. The failure of the author to take advantage of his material sets me thinking, dreaming of other stories that might develop out of this general situation supposing this or that premise were changed a bit.

For several years I made analytical drawings of the line of interest and pattern of almost every story I read. I still do it in my mind's eye. I once read the entire first act of Ibsen's "Doll's House" line by line, laboriously writing out every detail he put in about his characters or situation. Later, I did a radio version of the whole play, to run only half-an-hour. (The play itself has been termed one of the tightest pieces ever written, yet I had to condense it even more!) I had the benefit of a professional writer's radio script for comparison. The cutting and splicing I did against a stopwatch reading, which was later amplified in rehearsal by a further pair of stopwatches, and precision-timing, was one of the best bits of training I ever experienced.

It is well to remember, though, that this kind of study can only be done with a creative and loving heart. You must do it simply because it is exciting and stimulating—not primarily because you want to be a celebrity or make \$15,000 a year from writing. A creative joy in adventuring in a new world, must be the basic motivation.

REWRITE

THE STRATEGY OF CHARACTERIZATION

Elva and I were discussing some abstract, intangible phases of characterization a few days ago. We agreed that in our book statements such as the following are too all inclusive or sweeping generalities, interesting though they may be.

"Contrary to popular notion, mental sickness or neuroticism is not caused by an event but by the way a person reacts to it. A disturbing incident is only the match that sets off the firecracker; it's the gunpowder inside the cracker which actually causes an explosion.

"It is good old fashioned character, a compound of inherited tendencies and our ability to withstand or tolerate disappointments that determines whether we withstand child-

hood tragedies or whether they down us—all our lives."

In general one can agree with this philosophy, especially as it pertains to younger folk. (It is taken from Dr. Jacob H. Conn's article in the October READERS' DIGEST, reprinted from YOUR LIFE.) But we who weigh—or should, if we are competent writers—the subtle differentiations of characterization in stories, cannot help seeing that infinite variations in character can be assumed, and developed. One may not agree that what happens in childhood fixes us once and for all, yet can disagree with the doctor, who is as dogmatic at the other extreme.

The whole thing boils down to that thesis that has been argued from both sides of the fence since ancient days. The fatalist saying we are the victims of circumstance, and the idealist declaring we are "captains of our own souls". Elva and I noticed that none of the vital elements are or need necessarily to be constant or fixed.

RIGHTS and PERMISSIONS

BY PAUL S. NATHAN

DEPARTMENT 20: The traffic in subsidiary rights at Doubleday is, like practically every other activity of this six-footer among publishing houses, conducted on an impressive scale. There are half a dozen key people, each with a special job, responsible to Joseph Marks, head of the department—"Department 20," as it is called within the company.

From outside Department 20 Lee Barker handles book club and motion picture sales, extremely important subsidiaries.

When somebody wants to adapt a Doubleday title to radio, television, or the stage, Gail Rodkinson is the person they get in touch with. Miss Rodkinson's office is equipped with a TV set, but she doesn't spend much time looking at it, for the demand for television rights has been rather limited. The main reason for this, in her opinion, is that video producers feel it's too hard to condense a full-length book into a half-hour span—or even an hour, though there are comparatively few hour-long dramatic shows. "People haven't caught onto the fact," Miss Rodkinson says, "that you can do single episodes or chapters from a lot of stories and they'll stand up by themselves."

BILL BERGER, with an assistant who takes turns with him calling on newspaper editors across the country, runs the Doubleday syndicate. Various books are cut down and serialized—recent successful examples having been "The Caine Mutiny," with the drawings from the special illustrated edition, and Hedda Hopper's "From Under My Hat." After syndication of Anne Heywood's "There Is a Right Job for Every Woman," sales of the book increased markedly, and the author landed what was presumably the right job for her—as a daily columnist for

King Features. Miss Heywood's next one, not yet finished, "I Believe in People," is to receive similar treatment.

PROWLING through Department 20, you will also meet Mina Turner, in charge of reprint and foreign language rights, and Mrs. C. A. Pollard, who sells Doubleday material to other publishers for inclusion in anthologies, and conversely obtains permissions from other publishers for anthologies put out by Doubleday.

Miss Turner deals, sometimes at the behest of the State Department, with publishers printing Doubleday books in dozens of foreign languages and dialects. Simultaneously she keeps an eye on comic books. "Rhubarb," you'll be happy to learn, has done so well as a comic that a sequel, carrying H. Allen Smith's cat through a new series of adventures, is now being readied.

LILIAN KLEIN busies herself with commercial rights; nary a Hopalong Cassidy hat or holster has been manufactured that Miss Klein doesn't know about. Out of the royalties on some 200 trademarked items, "Hoppy's" literary creator has earned enough money to set up the Clarence E. Mulford Trust, a charitable foundation.

"Fractured French" has been taking up a good deal of Miss Klein's time lately. So far there have been "Fractured French" shower curtains and matching window curtains, kitchen towels, men's shorts, china bar plates, tiles, and coaster-ashtays, shirts, pajamas, wooden trays, old fashioned and highball glasses, paper towels, paper skirts, and paper ashtays (silver foil disposable). There are also paper napkins—domestic, and licensed for England—and any minute now there are going to be dresses, housecoats, and separates. Items like matchbooks and the paper napkins have sold in the millions.

The moral to all this, for authors and publishers, is clear: when you're considering whether to do a certain book, stop and ask yourself first if the paper napkin rights are going to be worth anything.

The "event", for instance, can be large or small in its effect. Or it can come out of the blue, or as the climax to a long series of small irritations, or after a period of extreme worry, fear or fatigue. Conditions can mean that one person is likely to crack or stand up. The identical person might crack under a set or circumstances, and not under another; or at one period of life & not at an earlier or later one.

One person would react in a radically different manner to the identical conditions from the way someone else would. In a story the "force", i.e., the MC, or the character which opposes him, can be made stronger or weaker. Part of the strategy of plotting or working out the emotional relations, lies in evaluating not only the relative strength and lack of strength of the two forces, but also in gauging the probable effect on a reader.

It is a fascinating task, balancing Cause and Effect. And the doctor notwithstanding, every writer worth his salt knows that sometimes "gunpowder" is more susceptible to "explode", and that one match can fire the powder where another will not. It is a story-teller's job to appreciate the distinctions in human relations and make them seem inevitable.

"Department 20". Mr. Nathan's article, we believe, is a valuable one for selling writers, or those likely to sell. It affords a vivid picture of a world many writers do not know much about. We are reprinting it so they will.

REWRITE

THE BULLETIN BOARD

As part of our plans to concentrate time, energy and thought on giving subscribers to REWRITE and clients of WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE the best possible service, we are discontinuing the WCS Circulating Library. The present members of the Library will receive full service. But no new enrollments or re-enrollments are being accepted. The Library filled a real need during the War. We are proud of the non-profit service it has given many writers.

We will undoubtedly be loaning books, and using them in our teaching. Specialized aid but not general library service. No time!

Do You Need Ms. Envelops? We still have a plentiful supply of One Fold nested sets of 6½ x 9½ and 7 x 10 sizes, best quality. We sell them at:

20 for \$1.00, 50 for \$2.00 (plus postage)

That means double quantity (40 and 100 respectively, of course!) since we sell them in sets. We do not plan to restock. So buy now.

Jennie F. Copeland has completed 20 annual articles about Christmas for the community paper in Mansfield, Mass. She uses them in reprint form as a personal card. Is not there an idea here for other local feature-writers in distant (non-competitive) areas?

The Authors' League of America had an annual deficit last year of \$21,222.51 despite raising its membership fee for voting & non-voting members alike to \$25 per year. Total deficit is now \$63,888.54. Salaries amounting to \$90,000 and dues of only \$35,000 appear to be the root of the trouble. We have urged the League to broaden the base of its membership to include—all writers at a nominal membership fee. We have been told that is not practical. Neither is a large deficit. Writers must learn to work together.

Multiple REWRITE Subscriptions. Increasing numbers of writers are renewing the annual subscription at \$3.00, and requesting us to send them two copies each month to their address. This enables them to cut and file.

One member of the WCS Family told us that she recently got out her back file of copies and spent a week rereading them. She found, curiously, that she picked up quite a few ideas she missed during current readings.

"Complete File" of REWRITE. That reminds us that we only have back copies, with a few out-of-print exceptions, for the three years and a few months we have lived in Lunenburg. Periodically, we receive requests for these "complete" files. You can have them at \$3.25 postage paid. You can even have them at \$5, with duplicate (clipping) copies included—a lot of words about writing, at half-price.

Prompt Renewals save our time to help you!

TWO GOOD BOOK IDEAS

Here is an idea for an annual book. Without depreciating the existing "best" annual collections of short stories, we would like to see an annual anthology that would bring together the best of the "magazine" stories as distinguished from the "literary" pieces. These latter appeal to the discriminating & often very limited few. Proof? The publishers consider a sale of 10,000 copies excellent. It means they make little or no money but achieve some "prestige" at no cost. And keep their own presses or those of the manufacturer turning.

I believe, though, that there should be a book to represent the millions of magazine-readers for whom the average "literary" story might just as well be written in Scandinavian or Sanscrit, because they simply cannot understand it. It does not speak a language of ideas or emotions they can appreciate. And don't forget that there are "good" stories among those which move millions and impel quite a few to write letters to the editors and even the authors.

I believe if such a book were edited with intelligence, interested enthusiasm and the catholicity and "love" of a sincere editor, who could understand all types of readers & magazines, it would have a wide sale. Teachers of writing, alone, would buy it and endorse ("adopt") enough copies to underwrite, I think, a first edition. The library sale, moreover, should be considerable, and a 25¢ reprint ought to sell extremely well. Such a project would need cultivation, but it carries the promise of promotion that no high-brow anthology possibly could. Probably I am a "low brow", but I see no reason why there should not be some cream in a market having a regular monthly and weekly appeal to millions of readers. Such an anthology should, properly edited, bring great prestige since it could raise the general cultural level of readers, and the magazines themselves, as the present "best" anthologies do not do, & never will. Because they are not read by slick magazine readers.

Here is another book idea. Last year, Joe Dodge, keeper of the AMC trading post at the base of Mt. Washington in Pinkham Notch and manager of the Club's hut system as well as the Dolly Copp public camping ground, celebrated his 30th year in the White Mountains. Familiarly known as the "Mayor of Mt. Washington" and/or "Porkie Gulch", he has had a colorful career affecting the very safety of millions of persons. He has a fund of amusing stories. Some day someone who knows and loves him, is going to write his life.

Two excellent articles on the art of getting a story started again after you have had to lay it aside momentarily or longer, & the difference between reading a ms. aloud, and in print, were published in the mimeo bulletin, TIDE, issued by the Writers' Workshop, 1554 Washington St., San Francisco 9, Cal.

REWRITE

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

These are the acceptances reported during the past month:

Alice M. Huggins

Book: WESTMINSTER PRESS

Stanley M. Kenney

Short story: HOLY NAME.

Doris Marston

Article: C. S. MONITOR.

True A. Rice, Jr.

Limericks: WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Quatrain: GRIT.

Mary Taylor

Article: THE FRIEND; Item: GRIT.

Column: POULTRY HERALD (17 years).

Helen Langworthy

Article: THE STATE JOURNAL (Mich.); PEN MONEY.

Murray Hoyt

Short Story: THE AMERICAN (Jan.)

Naomi Ingalls

Articles: THE FLOWER GROWER, COLLECTOR-HOBBYIST.

Filler: GARDENING.

Belle M. Drake

Filler: RURAL NEW YORKER;

Kathryn Wilson

Article: FAMILY CIRCLE

Maude Birkey

Juvenile stories: PRAIRIE FARMER (third year); FAMILY LIFE (2 stories).

Mary Grant Charles

Short Story: YOUNG PEOPLE.

Poems: Alpha Cmleron PI Magazine, New Orlando POST (reprints).

Norton Weber

Short Story: REDBOOK. (This is his second sale there—through Ingrid Hallen, also a member of the WCS Family, an agent with editorial experience in the slick field.)

Beverly Harris

Article: COUNTRY GENTLEMAN.

Note: send in your B. A. news. It helps a lot of writers to see what editors are buying, and it helps editors who read this column, to recognize you as a professional. It constantly amazes me what a lot of good and creditable writing is being done by members of the WCS Family. Our reports cover only a small segment of it.

It is very heartening to see how proud the members of the Family are of each other's successes. Never a month goes by that we don't get reports from members about other members pieces they have seen somewhere in print!

NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Yale Series of Younger Poets, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn. This is the time for poets under 40 to submit book mss. The competition closes February 28th.

Nash Buckingham, Box 270, Memphis, Tenn., has been appointed publisher's representative for the Stackpole Co., Harrisburg, Pa., publishers of hunting, fishing, gun & conservation books. His duties will involve editorial matters "designed to stimulate writing" in the field of outdoor writing.

McClellan & Stewart, 23 Hollinger Road, Toronto 13, Ont., Canada. New address for this firm representing British & American houses and publishing original Canadian material.

The Post Office Department has requested a new increase in parcel post rates. Incidentally, the Department discriminated recently against RFD boxholders. A general departmental order forbade deliveries the day following Christmas, although regular deliveries, strangely, were made in cities and towns. A large part of the Post Office Department annual deficit is due to government mail distributed free, and to inefficient and long-outmoded equipment.

William H. Wise & Co., one of the largest mail-order book publishers, has filed a petition under the bankruptcy law. It had previously been re-organized under the Federal Bankruptcy Law in 1935.

A member of the WCS Family made an interesting comment on his own stuff recently. He said: "The biggest portion of my salable material is subjective, even though it is written in the third person. It seems plausible to the editors because of its obvious sincerity; and that is another word for 'lived experience'." That's the quality editors buy.

TRUE STORY, Ruth Harris, Box 1448, Grand Central Sta., NYC 17, pays \$5 for letters about all sorts of subjects and opinions.

AMERICAN FAMILY, Pet Editor, 53 W. Jackson Chicago 4, Ill., pays \$5 for the best "pet" story about any kind of pet. Limit: not over 300 words. Pay \$2 for pet pictures.

Books That Ought to Be Renewed Periodically. Every so often we discover that a writer is depending on worn out tools. Dictionaries and writers' market lists should continually be kept up to date. The WRITERS' BOOK CLUB is here to advise you properly.

Mrs. Sol Cohen and Harry S. Goodwin kindly sent us commemorative stamps which added to our own, will help us to finance the WCS Fund. This small fund gave a number of year end subscriptions to REWRITE to handicapped and shut-in writers, who could not otherwise see the magazine. It has done a lot of good this year, thanks to the contributions of a large number of friends in 1952. Thank you!

REWRITE

CAN YOU GIVE AN IDEA EMOTION TWO WAYS?

I read a thought-provoking piece by a psychiatrist that illustrated rather neatly an ingenious plotting device. He described one of his patients as being sorry for himself. He carried always with him a yellowed clipping depicting the sad death of his parents. But said the psychiatrist, "The heart of the matter was not the shocking but his compulsion to dwell on it."

Do you see how the central idea can be interpreted and, more important, justified emotionally, as well as intellectually, in two ways? A clever dramatist could write a good tirade speech defending either point of view. The man could wail about his distorted life. Another member of his family could counter, using the logic of the psychiatrist.

Now how would you use that in plotting? I call it the "ace-in-the-hole" technique. It is the underlying basis for all stories involving a decision resulting from a preference for one of two alternatives. Using it in one way, you can show the reader the two alternatives, and pull the character back & forth between them. He wants to do one, and knows that he should do the other.

To increase dramatic surprise and shock a clever writer will at first disclose only a single phase of his double barreled idea. A Sunday School juvenile story has often been accused of being a case of "eat your cake & have it, too". But naturally when you write a story about a boy having to choose whether he will live up to a promise and lose an exciting experience, or break the promise & have the fun, you don't disclose your twist by which if he does the right thing, fate & the author will reward him.

In this case you merely argue the two alternatives plausibly. It is clear that this boy ought to go see his grandmother. But equally important is the chance to live, and grow in his own right. You can make both of the alternatives seem as if they ought to be done. Then when the boy decides that he can't be happy and enjoy his fun unless he visits his grandmother, you pull out of the hat an ingenious and plausible way for the boy after he has fulfilled his duty, to enjoy his fun. Perhaps it may not be exactly the same fun. It may be a bigger, richer experience. But it will be a satisfactory alternative.

I used to enjoy walking down to the Square in Cambridge behind a group of embryo "lawyers", those young students at the neighboring Harvard Law School. They would cut & saw a "case" in 50 directions until they had argued all the possible alternative decisions a judge could conceivably make. Doing this, they would seize and haggle over one variation after another. They would try to get a watertight brief for each side under all of the changing premises and conditions. Aware that a bull session of this kind could con-

tinue for days and not leave the original & continually rehashed case, I learned to argue with emotional conviction the two sides of every story I wrote. And I constantly indulged myself in the necessity of checking, very carefully, whether the premises I used were watertight when viewed from both sides of the fence. Not merely from the viewpoint of my favored MC.

Every story is a little like a debate. In one phase of my teaching life I judged several dozen intercollegiate debates. I quickly noticed that just as in a story, you have two forces at work, opposing each other. The judge and the spectators are in the position of watching both sides clinch their briefs. Incidentally, the best debaters argue during practice both sides. If they know how to justify both sides, they are much more able to break down the logic of the opposing side.. How many authors handle their stories thusly in their actual building and writing?

All of this brings you back to the matter of human relations, and my often repeated insistence upon considering all of the interrelations in a story as two-way relations.. How does the MC feel towards the girl? How does she feel towards him? Does one of them not feel deeply in love? Does the girl have to be won over, or does the way for married bliss simply have to be cleared of parental objections? And if the parents object, have you made their objections so logical a reader will accept the premises without question or without your having to be melodramatic about it?

To sum it up, this ability to turn a sweater inside out, so to speak, is more than an easy plot device, a short-cut. It is a fundamental thing. Until you have learned that trick of being so adaptable that as a storyteller you can be sympathetic to both of the two opposing forces in your story, you have not really learned your trade. You are just a slam-bang, action pulp writer, who must in the final analysis depend on a villain, because you need him to tighten up the plot. I have always said it takes a superior craftsman to tell a story where all of the people are mature adults. Not bullies and gangster hoodlums. It is simple to play the game as a variant of "cops and robbers", where everyone resolves every conflict by shooting his adversary.

As I think of it now as I write, it seems to me that Characterization, that mythical, illusive quality that changes rejections into acceptances, depends on this ability of a writer to be able to get inside a character and make his ideas and emotions stand up as logical, sound arguments. Too often we can do this only for the MC. Our understanding, the support we give to the feelings of other characters is purely perfunctory. Is it any wonder then, that our stories fall apart? At any rate, learn this technique. You will never regret it. You can use it endlessly.

REWRITE

CAN YOU ACCEPT REAL CRITICISM?

The other day I was working on a ms. that was written by a man who is not a member of the WCS Family. I told him straight out the things that were wrong. The things he would have to do to make the ms. at all acceptable on a commercial basis. He thanked me but remarked that my analysis seemed very negative. (In the next breath he confessed what to me was quite obvious, that he was working with a medium he knew very little about.) Elva commented when I told her about this matter at lunch, that he was another one of "those writers, who did not send his ms. for criticism, but because he wanted to be assured, or reassured, that his ms. was good."

That reaction is an unfortunately common, and often repeated one among a certain type of writer. Only a few days afterward another writer sought our advice about an opportunity he had to be published by a "vanity" press. It was obvious that he valued the so flattering letter of "acceptance", which in our opinion was a form one, although actual wording had been changed a bit to fit special circumstances. On another occasion Elva wrestled manfully with a book-length ms. of verse. During the personal conference which Elva gave the woman author, it came out that three other critics had "reviewed" the book and all of their opinions had been adverse, although the author rationalized them as being "favorable". Shortly afterward, we heard that the ms. had been read by still another critic.

The point is of course that if you are going to be a writer, a serious writer, it is essential for you to feel with your emotions in the story or ms., not in your relations, your business relationships, with editors & even those whose counsel you seek. Now it is very difficult to disassociate yourself and be impersonal about a part of your very own creative body and soul. But if you are serious in your ambition to create, you must be realistic. You must develop to some extent, at least, an ability to know whether you're writing good stuff or bad. An ability to decide whether a proposition is "practical" or not.

Obviously, beginning or inexperienced authors cannot know all the answers. But they can learn to take criticism; they can learn to balance one opinion against another, and decide which holds water. None of us can be "right" all of the time. But we can develop a limited amount of commonsense to help decide whether our experience should be interpreted one way or another. There are times, naturally, when one should be bold, maintain confidence in one's self. But so many writers seem to have no basis for accurate, and dispassionately sensible judgment. Closing their eyes, they just throw a ms. out into a world they have not bothered to examine, and hope ("hope", I say) it will somehow work a miracle.

The best writers, the literary craftsmen, and certainly the commercial ones, who compete without mercy against you, do not follow any such suicidal way of doing writing, and selling. Recently, I wrote a very "negative" analysis for a professional author, a person who has had long experience and lots of success. This writer thanked me profusely for all the things I said were wrong. It meant practically throwing several years of work in the wastebasket, because other critics, more awed by the writer's past success, had trod lightly on the ms. But this writer approaching the matter objectively as I had done, recognized that while there was plenty of room for disagreeing as to details, I was basically right in my analysis of a fundamental weakness.

Now what do I mean by being "realistic"? I maintain it is unrealistic to tackle an entirely new medium for the individual writer without first making a thorough study of it before attempting to write for it. In a long career of feature writing, I have never attempted to write for a new market by merely hacking out an old ms., or portion thereof, and sending it cold to the editor. Carefully, I have studied many issues of the periodical; have made myself familiar with it & as Stevenson and deMaupassant before me, I've soaked up the style and techniques until I, literally, could imitate the general quality so well that the editor himself wouldn't recognize any difference between my style & his.

I do not consider it realistic for all of the inexperienced writers, who have gotten only rejection slips from magazines and radio, to think they can hit TV. A critic-agent advertises widely that you don't have to be a TV writer to write TV scripts. Perhaps you don't, but all of the TV personnel I have met, have come from radio or the stage, and have lots of experience, yes, and contacts that energize the TV big-wigs into treating them respectfully.

I don't think it is being realistic for a writer who has not learned the discipline of writing short stories, to think that she is capable of writing serials. Or that because secondary markets are distasteful, a writer has a "slick mind". (That's a very common & often repeated excuse given to us, to rationalize writing for the slicks instead of the small markets, that, incidentally, pay only about 5¢ a word!) There are some writers to whom this applies, but for every one coming within this category, there are a thousand, an understatement, who don't.

But behind all of these details is the one big one, namely, that a writer must learn to think with his mind and not with his emotional reactions. He must develop a toughminded quality, so that he can take abuse and hard handling. So that the primary thing in life is that he can't be "hurt". That he can discuss a ms. objectively with an editor.

REWRITE

THE MONTH'S NEW BOOKS

THE CREATIVE PROCESS. Ed. Brewster Ghiselin. Univ. of California Press. \$6.50. This is, according to its own label, a "symposium," a book of universal interest to all who create. Writers predominate, but the discussion includes important comments or personal ideas based upon experience by Albert Einstein, a Japanese writer on art, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Mary Wigman, Vincent Van Gogh, Jean Cocteau, and many others representing diverse phases of the creative process. This is an anthology that has much to offer writers from hard to find sources. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

TALL TEXANS. J. Keith Miller. American Weave Press. \$.50. This is the 8th annual Durham Chapbook, co-sponsored by REWRITE & AMERICAN WEAVE as their contribution to the Writers' Conference held at the University of N. H. A promising young poet has gathered together a representative collection of his ballads and verse. Vigorous, capable and occasionally a note of unusual excellence.

UNDERSTANDING THE WEATHER. T. Morris Longstreth. The Macmillan Co. \$2.50. A handbook, useful to writers, that has been revised on two occasions. A good example of a "bread & butter" book that can keep a writer in pocket money for many years.

DICTIONARY OF WORLD LITERATURE. Ed. Joseph T. Shipley. The Philosophical Library. \$7.50. A dictionary of the words and phrases used by writers, critics and scholars in their discussion of literature. A useful reference & recently revised.

CREATIVE DRAMATICS FOR CHILDREN. Frances C. Durland. The Antioch Press. Paper: \$1.50 or cloth: \$2.75. This is a manual for teachers and leaders. It is based on the author's own experience from Mass. to California, by way of the famous Hull House and other centers, where she has taught and directed. It covers the entire field and should be very useful to writers as well as directors. It is by an active writing member of the WCS Family. We are proud of her.

STANDARD HANDBOOK OF PREPOSITIONS, CONJUNCTIONS, RELATIVE PRONOUNS & ADVERBS. Funk & Wagnalls Co. \$2.75. By reason of its simple instructions on good usage and its carefully organized and alphabeticized lists, this is an essential tool for writers. By glancing at the lists, one may tell instantly if he is using an acceptable phrase. If one is yearning to break the rules, he can do it correctly and in good taste. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

BOOKS WE CAN RECOMMEND

WRITERS ON WRITING. Ed. Herschel Brickell.. \$3.00. A handbook by staff members of Univ. of N. H. Writers' Conferences. Bill wrote a pair of chapters on the Magazine Short Story, and the Writer-Agent Relationship.

PLOT DIGEST. Kobold Knight. \$4.00. We have imported this book from England and find it useful. There are not many good books about plotting. This one is practical.

Note: we do not like to clutter up precious space with plugs for books. But we will be glad to advise you as to the best books, that deal with your particular interests.

SOME NEWS AND COMMENT

New York State Poetry Day Contest, Lucile Coleman, 166 Park Ave., Port Richmond, Staten Island 2, N. Y. Albert Ralph Korn is offering \$50.00 for the best poem (limited to 32 lines) submitted before October 1, 1953. All poets eligible; any subject. Only 1 entry and must be submitted in triplicate anonymously.

"Along Main Street", PATHFINDER, Dept T., Washington 5, D. C., pays \$10.00 for ideas, that may prove useful to community service-clubs, merchants, etc. Community improvement is the general key.

The American Poetry League's January news Bulletin is full of interesting data. Dues have been raised to \$2.00, a very modest fee for the many privileges. Mary O'Connor is a newly elected president. She apparently has every intention of making things hum. A new Club anthology, for instance. Membership is by invitation. Bill and Elva have sponsored quite a few new members.

Dr. Jack W. Strode has sent us two recent books for inclusion in the WCS Library, one of the most complete we know of so far as a collection of books about writing is concerned. We are grateful to Dr. Strode.

Priscilla Brookman, Canadian writer, gave us an interesting and stimulating thought a few days ago:

"Last fall, I was invited to hear a Torontonian, the author of three or four books, a speaker at a local travel club meeting. The subject was the research she had done in connection with her last book, a period extending over about 4 years.

"What captured my undivided attention was her amazing enthusiasm for her subject. This was shipping on the Great Lakes. She had soaked up the sights and sounds and smells connected with shipping, so that she was able, very effectively, to clothe her facts so vividly in these sights, sounds, and smells that they were alive. They hit home."

That is something to think about. How many writers achieve that compelling quality? In addition, this author lighted a candle, making Priscilla Brookman see an article needing badly to be written. I have told her to write it. I hope she does.

Enthusiasm is your greatest gift. Use it!

REWRITE

SKETCHES ARE NOT STORIES

Periodically in our reading of mss. there appears a run of "sketches". These are frequently well written, and entertaining, if a reader is interested in problems of writing and the techniques of story-telling. But so far as the editors of commercial magazines, the men and women who buy stories from freelance writers are concerned, sketches don't rate very high, if at all. Editors eternally demand stories. Stories in which "things happen, people react to situations and feel intensely".

A sketch is weak because it is, generally speaking, merely a happening, or a picture. It is related to the incident. It is static in its depiction of the human relations involved. There is not very much of the reaction and chain of Cause and Effect, which in the story leads inevitably to the decisive, resolving show-down. A sketch always, to my mind, is like a spent bullet, or a dud, that goes through the motions, but does not create an explosion when it hits. To say it in another way, the sketch bears the same general resemblance to a story as does a glider to an airplane. One has a self-propelling engine, the other hasn't. And while the difference may seem trivial, it does result in a very different degree of satisfaction for the reader.

Readers are primarily interested in characters and situations, not simply one or the other. They want to be entertained, and entertainment is usually greatest when there is a stir of excitement—intellectual or emotional. You know how the nicest people can turn into temporary savages, when they get an opportunity to watch a man-hunt or a trial in which a man's life is at stake. Readers are insatiable in wishing to identify themselves with a hero. What would I do if I were in a situation like that?

No matter how well written a sketch is, it does not possess that kind of pulse beat. It portrays a situation, a character or a background, but it does not show to any extent, in the same dynamic manner that stories do, what happens as a result of the crashing in space and time of two major forces. One of the principal differences between a story & a sketch is perhaps the greater perspective that a story affords. It seems more closely integrated into the long flow of life. The sketch gives vividly the feeling of a chapter, one phase or interval in the long flow of time, but it does not enable the reader, in his own mind, to fill in what went ahead and what will inevitably follow.

Great story-tellers have the power to re-create a little world of illusion, but also to make us feel that we have always existed in that world, and will continue to even long after the story is finished. That is magic: the ability of a teller of tales to make us believe after an acquaintance lasting only a

few hours or days, that we have known a set of characters all their days. Only the very exceptional sketch can do that, no matter if the impact seems as strong as that of a memorable short story or not.

There's a number of different kinds of fictional sketch. Probably the strongest of all is the character sketch. This is because no stronger appeal exists than the element and interest factor of people. But the raciest, most picturesque character sketch is usually like an artist's conception of a "still-life" material. It does not wholly and completely stir or satisfy the one who considers it.

But again success depends considerably on the ability & sheer skills of the author or artist to make us experience the whole life of the subject, over and beyond the immediate moment or two in which we glimpse him.. Consider the portraits of Rembrandt, one of the great character sketchers of all time. I recall certain of his pictures, which use a completely opposite technique. In one there will be complete emphasis on the character. Everything else is blotted out. The effects of a whole life are etched deeply in a worn face, the shape and movements of a body and the clothes it wears. In the other type the character is painted against a background, a static scene, but one implying action. The two types of sketch taken together are suggestive of the techniques a writer needs to use.

The background sketch is one much utilized by amateur writers. They seem to think & believe strongly, that if they create a kind of "street scene" sketch with enough color, noise and realistic confusion, they'll have scored a triumph, and that editors will buy it immediately. This is not the place for me now to discuss fragmentary stories. Enough to point out that most so-called "fragmentary" stories are very carefully organized by the author (who knows exactly what he is doing) so as to prevent them from being merely the episodic splinter type of story, which most editors abhor. It is a fact, however, every critic quickly learns, that many writers in an innocuous way can set down on paper very good facsimiles of familiar backgrounds. All that is to the good. But then the need is to people those backgrounds with characters, & induce them to become involved in important and entertaining problems that will engross the largest possible cross-section of readers.

There are other types of sketch. The atmosphere sketch. Remember the opening scene of the dramatization of "Main Street"? All the characters upon entering remarked about the heat. The NEW YORKER uses a lot of ironic sketches. Ideas are the emphasized angle. These sketches are good to study. But never forget that if you wish to sell stories, you must progress beyond mere sketches. Put the motor into your glider. Make it tick!

REWRITE

I ANALYZE SOME OPENINGS

It is always interesting to see practical application of the fundamentals of fiction-writing in the stories one reads in print. I have rarely observed so dramatic an example of the principle of instant reader identification, though, as in the Feb. issue of the WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION. Five pieces of fiction, long and short, all illustrate it and only one really makes no effort to achieve, or develop the effect of eye-witness appeal to the reader. I will discuss that one later. (I refer of course only to the opening.)

Let me first point out the principle in a general way. The idea is that the reader is made to feel that he is living vicariously, enjoying the experience (an emotional experience) of the MC as if it were his own, and happening to him right here in the immediate present. He feels and lives the experience, does this personally. He is able thereby to widen his own experience and be a deskchair explorer. He can live a thousand lives, and never leave his own livingroom. That is the real fascination of fiction, and of its two neighbors, history and biography. And why a considerable number of enlightened historians & biographers consider fiction a valuable adjunct to their work, when its authoritative and responsible in its approach to life.

Now here are the openings of the stories, in the order in which they appeared. I urge students of good writing to read the pieces in their entirety in the WHC, and compare a similar sampling from at least one, or more, other magazines, slick, secondaries & pulp, or small family and religious or farm magazines.

"Love Is a Funny Thing" by Spain Sire.

"Dave Morrow was always kidding. I don't think he ever took anything seriously in his life for more than two minutes and that included me, although we had been going together for nearly a year now. Even so, every time I saw that off-beat face of his, I'd go all soft and sirupy inside, like a chocolate soda. Not that I'd ever let Dave see."

Do you see how the reader is Helen Jones? Do you see also how the style sets the teen age tempo immediately? Moreover, in 3 paragraphs (15 lines of type both characters in a paragraph each plus the opening one, have been characterized at least by vivid and amusing type. There is no doubt that the story is to be young love and humorous. Notice the first short, punchy sentence. The situation is practically summed up there; a girl with a loveable lug who won't be serious...

The second and third sentences are heavy, but easily readable because of the dialogue quality of timing and emphasis. It's a light love story, but a good one to study. Editors do not often give their lead spot to an autobiographical "I" story.

"The Mad Draycotts" by Mary Howard.

"The vicar drove his middle-aged and scrupulously clean little car carefully through the gray cobbled streets of Whitewald..... to where Bededown Manor had once stood. At the thought of Bededown a shadow crossed his face. One could live in the past too much—like the Draycotts of Bededown."

Obviously, this an English story, a novel in two parts, incidentally. It uses a slower style. That of the author looking over a MC's shoulder. The author uses this power in the second paragraph to slip in description to set the scene. It is not as effective an opening, but still the reader can identify.

"Beautiful Thief" by Margaret Culkin Banning.

"On the day when the great tree was ready to be lighted in Rockefeller Plaza it rained in a steady depressed way, as if unable to stop even though it was so near Christmas. At five o'clock the tree was lighted nonetheless. The sparkle and color of its bangles were dimmed and the mighty star on its top seemed unnatural. Blanche thought it was a great pity.

"What troubled her most was the present for Larry. Perhaps I'll take it back," thought Blanche... Then her cab darted forward.. She had a last glimpse of the lighted tree and it met her mood. You can get all ready for Christmas but there are some things you can't control.

"Clare Bryant, who was going to meet Blanche Haven's husband for a late afternoon drink, passed the tree as she walked from her office. She thought it more beautiful than if it had been able to sparkle against a clean winter sky....

"She was one of thousands of girls in New York who in the next few hours would meet men to whose affections and incomes other women had the legal claim. She would meet him with no sense of being a love thief."

Do you see how the line of interest & the viewpoint change in this story? How it's told rather than shown? Mrs. Banning is a highly successful writer of articles and has specialized on this general subject of relations in marriage. I could criticize the story in several other respects, but suggest readers do it for themselves.

"I and My True Love" by Helen MacInnes. A serial.

"Kate awoke with the second ringing of the alarm clock. As she dressed she began to sing, thinking of Bob Turner and last night. She opened the door, brushing her hair, as she heard Minnie's solid weight plod upstairs..."

It gets going right off, doesn't it? The next line starts the dialogue. Then drama.

REWRITE

"You're a Big Boy Now" by Lee Rogow.

"He was named Winthrop Schmerhorn Woods but everybody called him Pinky. His grandparents insisted that he was the most enchanting child that had ever lived. His parents publicly spoofed at that notion but secretly agreed that he was.

Harrison Hitchcock Woods was born after the standard interval. It was a big name for a little boy, so they called him Pogo. His grandparents, of course, insisted Pogo was the most enchanting infant that had ever lived. Blake and Mimi Woods were more objective but.... The only dissenting opinion, in fact, was Pinky's. Pinky from the first maintained a... This, despite the fact that Pogo obviously regarded his older brother as the most exciting object on earth.

"When Blake Woods expressed concern at the failure of his sons to become chums, Mimi said, 'They really don't have a great deal in common, dear. Wait till Pogo learns to talk...'

"At seventeen months...Everybody was excited, that is, except Pinky.

"One evening Blake and Mimi were..."

I have cut this opening rather cruelly to bring out two principles. First, notice how the author uses the oldest viewpoint in the world: a story-teller "talking" to his readers. It gives him an omniscient viewpoint & yet puts the reader right into the midst of the story material, and eventually the "action". Second, notice how step by step this plot is set up. The last three paragraphs—even more than the first two emphasize this and reiterate the situation: a jealous little boy is faced with a real problem, a happy, silver-spoon young brother who threatens Pinky's world. What's he going to do to remain king of the castle? Notice how the author makes you want to find out? How does he do it? You study the lead till you see.

Practically all of these five yarns use a standard, but different, opening formula. A clever variety and freshness is achieved in this way by the editor. How many inexperienced writers stop to consider whether they're using an effective opening device, & whether they are using it in a trite or ingenious off-pattern way? You can't tell what stories an editor is going to surround your ms. with, but you can build an opening that will make your story distinctive, and make it team up with others having varying openings.

Moreover, you can use different methods of opening your stories, (1) to give your work constantly changing diversity; and (2) so as to suit different types of story with an appropriate and effective beginning. As an exercise go back and in your mind shuffle the stories and endings. See if certain of these stories would hit harder with one of varying

types of opening. Try several on each, then decide whether the author picked the best.

AN EXAMPLE OF "EDITORIAL PURPOSE"

I often speak about the necessity of making editorial purpose stand out in a story. A news release from Garden City Books about a new series of juvenile books shows what I mean. Mary Elting got an idea: she believed that a set of "at work" books would be valuable. The publishers thought so, too. So, the series was tried out with two experimental titles, "Trucks at Work" and "Trains at Work".

"These two titles were so highly successful," the publishers explain, "both in sales and enthusiastic acceptance by educators and librarians, that they were greatly expanded with up-to-date material and many new pictures. Then two new titles were added to the series...Each book has been exhaustively researched and checked for absolute accuracy. And each book is illustrated by a different artist." (For additional merchandising 'appeal'. Ed.)

This is how a series (a "bread-and-butter" line) is built to sell for years. The author has got herself a job for life almost. Why don't you think up something like this?

HAVE YOU A POT-BOILING PROBLEM?

Pot-boiling is an essential part of nearly all writers. Few of us are so situated that we do not need to make some money from freelance writing. This being so, we should recognize the fact realistically and do whatever is necessary or seems best. Too many men and women write with this inner conflict of the need for earning money and the desire to write according to their ambition, literally tearing them apart. But perhaps unconscious of it, they do not face the problem realistically.

What do I mean by the word "realistically" in this sense? I mean that a writer ought to devote some time to thinking through the idea and the need. Can he combine his desired ambition with pot-boiling, or must he do two kinds of writing? If so, what is a good form of pot-boiling for him? What suits one person won't fit another. And pot-boiling is as practical as selling wood off one's farm to raise money for a labor-saving tool.

There are hundreds of kinds of pot-boiler types of writing today. Fillers of all kinds including quizzes, puzzles, cross-word puzzles, jokes, etc. Then there are contests, & special local features for the weekly paper and poems to fit pay markets. There are columns that pay small prizes. There are literally no end to the angles that a determined person may sharpen. Some writers even disappear into business or hobbies momentarily in order to earn a stake. There is no disgrace in earning the right to write as you wish.